

itself would seem to indicate that the distinguished Democrat is just a little weak in the faith himself, otherwise he would not be likely to raise the issue himself. It is just like him, however, to presume to state the paramount issue as the other fellow sees it, and to state it two years ahead of time at that. Without going into unnecessary details, we think we can assure Colonel Bryan and his political associates that their fears are groundless; that there is no danger of Colonel Roosevelt or any other Republican trumping up such a policy. The Republican party is essentially the war party; it was ready for war while the present Administration and its apologists were still too proud to fight; it saw the Civil War through to a triumphant issue and it will see this war through with like persistency and steadfastness.

There is this fine distinction to note, however: that should the bungling continue and bad blunders result, the Republican candidate in 1920 will undoubtedly run on a platform that will charge the administration of the war with being a failure, which, as compared with the war being a failure, is a horse of another color. We admit that this is a fine distinction for The Commoner to get, but he ought to be able to grasp it after a time.

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### A RISKY PROPOSITION.

IT strikes us that the Overman bill providing for the delegation of blanket authority to the President to reorganize governmental agencies involves the most radical departure from our established forms of government yet contemplated. It is advanced as a war measure of the utmost importance and the probabilities are that its immediate objects are altogether desirable. The President is said to be seeking this sweeping grant of powers that he may more easily avoid the delays and duplications that constantly stand in the way of direct executive action, and that he may thus be enabled to speed up the cumbersome machine at the national capital. As a war measure it may be all right, but it embodies such a wholesale and unconditional grant of powers that Congress cannot afford to be reckless in its consideration.

As we view the proposition, the whole matter hinges upon how the President would make use of this tremendous power that he now seeks. That puts the question directly up to him alone. If the plans for reorganization he happens to have in mind are practicable, then the Overman bill would make a wise disposition of the great powers sought. If, on the other hand, the President is liable, either deliberately or unwittingly, to abuse such powers, then to pass the bill would be an irreparable blunder. It all depends upon which view you choose to take.

Speaking of the presidential powers now existing and in prospect, the opponents of the measure maintain that what is needed more than additional powers is the proper exercise of the powers now at hand. The President's critics are all of the opinion that he has failed to utilize his present prerogatives to the best advantage because he has not made the best possible selection of subordinates to exercise authority in his name. They hold that if he would rest content with the vast powers already vested in him and take more pains in exercising it he might make better headway. But why speculate? The President has served notice on Congress to pass the measure without compromise, and that means that it will be passed, whether it is necessary or not.

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### LOOSE LANGUAGE.

AS originally introduced in the Senate, the measure proposing to amend the espionage laws provided that anybody using language "calculated" to bring the Constitution, flag, soldiers, or uniform of the United States into disrepute would be liable to severe penalties. Senator Lodge and others took the position that inasmuch as it was aimed at the use of loose language of a treasonable nature, the measure itself ought to be free from all the uncertainties that might arise from loose phraseology. Because of their well grounded objection, the Senate changed the word "calculated" to "intended," thereby clearing up both the letter and the spirit of the proposed law.

While strongly in favor of the measure as a whole, the senator from Massachusetts took the position that it was not safe to repose the interpretation of the espionage act entirely in the hands of the Administration, holding that "In our zeal, we are running the risk of destroying not only the form but the very essence of free government." It is high time that our legislators in Washington should take cognizance of this very dangerous tendency. The espionage act ought to pass promptly and be put into execution at the earliest possible moment. It ought also to be made stringent enough for all practical purposes, but it must not be entirely shorn of traditional safe guards.

While on the subject of loose language, it occurs to us that Mr. George Creel can thank his lucky star that the proposed espionage act was not in effect a year ago. As we now recall the incident in mind, it was shortly following the declaration of war against Germany that one James H. Maurer exclaimed at a meeting of the Labor Forum in New York City, "to hell with the Stars and Stripes," and that Creel spoke from the same platform just a few days later and ventured the observation that "people should not worry whether Mr. Maurer actually did say 'to hell with the Stars and Stripes.'" That was as far as he got; the audience promptly hissed him down and substituted the singing of "America" for the balance of his speech.

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### THE PRESIDENT'S PREDICTION.

PRESIDENT WILSON recently took occasion to address a letter to the Democrats of New Jersey in which he observes that "the old party slogans have lost their significance and will mean nothing to the voters of the future." It goes without saying that this prediction, coming from such high source, has started political wiseacres speculating in a dozen different directions. Whether the President was merely indulging in an abstract observation or whether he has a definite program in mind, is the point that is puzzling politicians of every color and calibre. Even his own party members are more or less nonplused over this ambiguous utterance of their exalted oracle. Which is not to be wondered at, for the Democracy was never so strongly entrenched as now, and it is not at all pleasant for its well-fed disciples to contemplate a prospective political smash-up.

And still, as we interpret the President's words, he was thinking of policies, not parties—of new political issues that will arise out of the war, and not of new political alignments. For this prediction must be construed in the light of the President's recent political activities, and it must be admitted that he has done nothing of late to lead anyone to entertain the delusion that the old political fences are down and destroyed beyond repair. On the other hand, if his acts and official associates are any criterion to go by, he is still a straight party man and seems to manifest as strong a desire as ever to separate the sheep from the goats, political speaking. He is still in the saddle and going strong, and why he should deliberately seek to unhorse himself lies beyond our comprehension.

Some one has suggested that perhaps the President was adroitly paving the way for a non-partisan election this fall, but we doubt it. The American people are in no temper to tolerate an emasculated campaign this year and nobody knows this better than President Wilson himself. The two old parties will enter the lists as usual this fall, asking no quarter of each other, and it will be a finish fight. That is our prediction.

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We can decide the war this year if we set about it now, in calm conviction and earnest zeal. We may thus shorten the conflict by years, saving millions of lives and billions of treasures. We can do it if all of us, statesmen, manufacturers, housewives, merchants, workmen, farmers, doctors, lawyers, editors, clergymen and all the rest of us, make up our minds to get on the job.—Punksutawney Spirit.

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The Russian revolution started a year ago and it is still impossible to see the spokes of the spinwheel.—New York Sun.

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If Henry W. Longfellow were writing "The Building of the Ship" today, he would have to work in a few extra stanzas.